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# spaces

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KITCHEN  
COLOR  
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SPECIAL ISSUE  
Kitchens  
& Baths

{Plus} Modern cooks, 1920s looks  
An old house opens up

NO MORE MESS — SLICK SOLUTIONS FOR TEEN BATHROOMS



“Her main priority was a walk-in shower — it was a big deal to her,” says the mother of the 13-year-old girl who uses this remodeled bathroom. “Now that we have one, I wish all our showers were walk-in showers. It’s so great to not have to clean a door or have a shower curtain or a rug.”



# Cleaning Up

DESIGNING  
BATHROOMS  
FOR TEENAGERS  
HAS ITS OWN  
SPECIAL  
CHALLENGES.

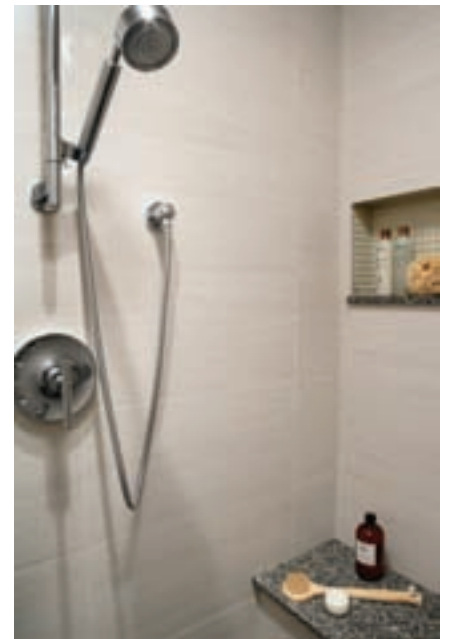
When remodeling a 13-year-old girl's bathroom, there are considerations beyond sink, shower and toilet selections.

"I brought out a huge basket of her hair stuff and said, 'This has to fit,' " said the girl's mother.

That was just one of the design challenges faced by Krista Schwartz of Indicia Interior Design and Furnishings.

The St. Paul interior design firm has developed something of an expertise in teenage bathroom design: While Schwartz oversaw the remodel of two lower-level bathrooms in an Edina home for the teenage girl and her teenage brother, colleague Katie Grondahl tackled a new bathroom in St. Paul for two teenage brothers.

"Good hidability is important — selecting materials that hide the not-so-clean stage," Schwartz said, laughing. "It's about design that will hold up to the wear and tear that boys put on a space, and what will be the best product to withstand a girl spilling nail polish remover. And yet, there has to be flexibility involved, for the time when the teen is out of the house and the space belongs to the parents again."



by molly millett photos by susan gilmore

Krista Schwartz of Indicia incorporated a raised vessel sink into this teenage girl's bathroom to avoid mishaps like a curling iron or blow dryer falling in while water was running.





PHOTO BY KRISTA SCHWARTZ

To make this small, basement bathroom work for the two teenage boys who would be using it, Katie Grondahl of Indicia designed details like a shampoo niche and lots of hooks for towels.



PHOTO BY KRISTA SCHWARTZ

## A bathroom for boys

OK, so designers aren't magicians. They can't invent self-cleaning toilets that address boys and their ... poor aim. But they can address general messiness. That's what Grondahl did last year when a St. Paul family decided to install a second bathroom in their basement for their teenage sons.

"Their vanity has an open shelf underneath the sink, with decorative baskets for each boy to store items for his daily routine," Grondahl said. "Also, to keep things simple, because kids aren't always going to fold their towels neatly on towel bars, we put in a lot more hooks."

The family of four had reached a point where they would probably have appreciated any kind of second bathroom, even an outhouse.

"It's a house on the edge of Highland Park and Macalester-Groveland, built in the 1940s, with only one bath in the house for

the entire family," the designer said. "As the boys got older, the family wanted to add another bathroom so they could have their own space — as well as clearly adding to the value of the home with a second bathroom."

Grondahl designed the second bathroom from the toilet up.

"There had not been a bathroom there before," she says. "We stole some space from the existing storage area in the unfinished portion of the basement. We were dealing with lower ceilings, a slightly odd shape and, really, trying to figure out the best use of space for two individuals to be able to get ready in the morning in a very small area."

The compact bathroom is thus divided into two parts, with a privacy wall separating the toilet from tub/shower and vanity.

It is a masculine space, with a dark-stained cherry vanity and a gray tile floor (good for hiding the dirt!), but one feature everyone in the family enjoys is the Kohler bubble-jet tub, which surrounds the soaker

in gentle, champagne-like effervescence rather than gales of traditional whirlpool jets.

"They wanted it for therapeutic reasons for one of their sons, but they have found that it's something the entire family loves," Grondahl says.

The boys were also involved in the design of the space and made a decision that pleased the designer.

"We selected a combination of porcelain and glass tile, and I came up with two color schemes — one was much more neutral, tans and khakis, and the other was more a spa blue/green shade," Grondahl says. "I had a meeting with the parents, but in the end, the boys made the final decision on what tile they wanted to go with. And they went with the blue/green, because they wanted to do something fun."

The parents were just glad the project was completed before morning rush hour began again.

"We worked on it last summer, and they wanted it finished before the new school year started," Grondahl says.

## ■ Two siblings, two bathrooms

Schwartz's clients, the Edina family, had their son and daughter in mind when they bought their 1970s-era home a few years ago and installed a pool in the back yard — ironically, after the previous homeowners had removed one.

"It's just a great thing to have when you want to keep track of teenagers," says the teens' mom, who asked not to be named because of privacy concerns.

The family also liked how the walkout lower level — which has a family room that overlooks the pool and hot tub — had separate wings, with separate bedrooms and bathrooms for their son and daughter.

"Especially with a girl and a boy, it's nice that they have separate spaces," their mother says.

"In the teen-age years, they get a little funny about privacy issues."

And yet, neither bathroom was ideal.

"Our son's bathroom wasn't more than just a sink and a toilet — there was no shower," the mother says. "They had converted a closet, it was that small. It just wasn't functional."

Schwartz reconfigured the hallway to get the space the family needed to add a shower to the boy's bathroom.

The girl, now 13, had an outdated bathroom that she lived with for some time.

"When things started leaking, we thought it was time to finish remodeling the rest of the lower level," the mother says.

Both the children had some input into the design of the bathrooms.

"I wanted to be involved, because it's my space," the son says. "I chose a rock floor. It's 'outside-ish.'"

Specifically, Schwartz describes the boy's



"It's spa-like and, like, relaxing," says the 13-year-old girl of her new bathroom.

floor as a "stone-like pebble floor tile" that contrasts with the "clean, white, elongated subway tile."

The shower incorporates a built-in bench and, instead of a pedestal sink, the sink is now housed in a cabinet to give the small room some storage space.

"We kept it pretty neutral and simple, because there wasn't a huge budget, as there were other areas we were remodeling at that time," Schwartz says.

The girl's new bathroom — which is also used by pool guests — is a bit more luxurious, including her choice of shower.

"I saw a show that had a walk-in shower, and I thought it'd be cool," she says. "No foggy door."

But because this bathroom was also rather small, Schwartz needed to get creative to find enough square footage to fulfill the girl's wish.

"We did sneak some extra space out of a

storage closet in the adjacent laundry room," Schwartz says.

Now, instead of a 1970s-era bathroom, the space feels more like a 21st century spa: Schwartz designed clear-coated maple cabinetry and rice-linen walls to contrast elegantly with 2-inch by 2-inch charcoal floor tiles and charcoal-and-creamy-veined Cambria countertops. Elegant accents include a raised, ivory vessel sink and a glass tile shampoo niche in the shower. In-floor heat adds to the retreat ambience.

"We kept it clean, with an Asian feel to it," Schwartz says. "It's pretty Zen."

The challenges, besides limited square footage, included low ceilings and no natural light, typical problems for basement bathrooms.

"We moved trunk lines for the HVAC and plumbing for the upstairs bath, and we eliminated a couple of soffit areas," Schwartz says.

The pale cabinetry, as well as light sconces on either side of the oversized mirror (also requested by the girl) and the recessed light-

ing in the ceiling brighten things up. But one of the most important features is how much storage is hidden among the elegance.

"We made smaller drawers for her clips and hair binders," Schwartz says. "And there's a cabinet next to the mirror with adjustable shelves for hair spray bottles, ear-ring holders and blow dryers."

The teen looves her new bathroom — with, like, one exception.

"I just wish the color was a little bit brighter," she says. "Like, orange and red."

Down the hall, her brother is not complaining.

"It's nice to have your own bathroom," he says, "and not have a bunch of clutter in there from other people, like if you have a sister who has a bunch of hair and makeup stuff." ●

*Molly Millett, a Pioneer Press reporter, is a frequent contributor to Spaces.*